



AN TÚDARÁS PÓILÍNEACHTA  
POLICING AUTHORITY

**Policing Authority publishes 11th report on policing performance by the Garda Síochána during the COVID-19 crisis**

23 February 2021

The Policing Authority has today published the 11th in a series of reports on its assessment of policing performance by the Garda Síochána during the COVID-19 crisis, which was submitted to the Minister for Justice last week.

The introduction of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) with a variety of fines for breaches of regulations was the result of the stark change in the prevalence of the virus and the increased transmissibility of new variants. At the time of that report, 5,784 fixed charges had been issued by the Garda Síochána for breaches in COVID-19 regulations. With the exception of 16, all of these have been issued in January and the first eleven days of February.

Approximately 85% (4,911) of those fines were issued to people leaving their homes without a reasonable excuse. Those aged 18 to 25 received the highest number of fines, accounting for 53% of all fines issued. Males received three times more fines than females, accounting for 75% of the total fines.

Policing Authority Chairperson, Bob Collins commented:

*“The stark change in the prevalence of the virus and the increased transmissibility of new variants, in recent months has resulted in government introducing a wider range of responses to breaches and to make simpler and more immediate the imposition of a sanction in the light of the growing threat to public health and to the health service. The Authority recognises the importance of the Garda Síochána ensuring a consistency of approach by its members in determining whether the imposition of a Fixed Penalty Notice on a member of the public is appropriate. We have been given detailed briefings on the current approach to this and are reassured by the Commissioner’s understanding and response.”*

In 2021, new measures were introduced to prevent non-essential international travel, placing additional requirements on the Garda Síochána to enforce these restrictions. This has included establishing high visibility checkpoints at airports and ports to discourage travel and use enforcement powers if necessary. Regarding the proposed mandatory quarantine at designated facilities, it is the Authority’s view that while the Garda Síochána may have a role in terms of responding to incidents at such facilities, the transporting of persons to, and supervision of persons staying at these facilities, may not be the optimal use of limited Garda resources.

The Garda Commissioner is now seeking to use the existing Garda Reserve, which now numbers 476 following the attestation of 69 new members in January 2021, to leverage the maximum capacity of

the organisation. The extended utilisation of the Garda Reserve is a positive step, which the Authority welcomes.

The next meeting in public between the Policing Authority and the Garda Commissioner will take place on Thursday 25 February. The meeting will be live-streamed on [www.policingauthority.ie](http://www.policingauthority.ie).